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P L A N

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Amend and Enforce the Act of 23 Geo. III.

FOR THE

BETTER RELIEF AND EMPLOYMENT

OF THE

P O O R;

AND FOR

**Substituting NEW RESOURCES for their Support,
which may gradually reduce the POOR'S RATES, and,
in-time, render that Burthen easier to the Public.**

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AND FOR

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BETTER WELL-FAIR AND EMPLOYMENT

FOR THE

Amount and Finance the Act of 1801, 1802

AND

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TO

Amend and Enforce the Act of 23 GEO. III.

FOR

The better Relief and Employment
of the Poor, &c.

THE enormous expence in maintaining
our Poor, the ineffectual provision for
their relief and employment under the nu-
merous laws that have been made on that
head, and the want of a proper system of
police for that purpose, hath long been a just
and serious matter of complaint. It is un-
necessary to enumerate the variety of evils
which have arisen from this source.

If any Plan can be formed which tends to
abate these evils, by easy and gradual advances,
and affords a prospect, in time, of working a
radical cure for them, it seems an object of the
utmost importance, and will call for the pa-
tronage of Government, and the assistance of
every able and good citizen.

The following thoughts upon that subject
are suggested by one who has employed much
time and expence in the pursuit of it, and

wishes to revive an attention to it at a time when, he flatters himself, there is not only inclination to undertake that arduous work, but power and ability to effect it.

This great business seems to branch itself into two heads.

First, The forming some wise and prudent regulations for encouraging labour and industry, and preventing, as far as may be, the increase of the Poor.

Under this head, we may class the encouragement of clubs and societies amongst the poor labourers and artificers, by small weekly or monthly contributions, to assist each other in maintaining themselves and their families, when from sickness or infirmities they shall be unable to work; and the investing proper powers in the persons whom the subscribers to those clubs or societies shall entrust with the management, receipt, and application of the money raised, which seems to afford a very good expedient for that purpose.

Secondly, The finding suitable employment for those who are able to work, but cannot procure it; the taking proper care of all those persons who are, by their infancy, age, or infirmities, unable to provide for themselves; and the arranging and conducting the whole in such method, and with such prudence and regularity, that, on the one hand, the indigent Poor may be decently fed, clothed, and lodged;

lodged; and on the other, that the strictest order, decency, oeconomy, and frugality may be observed and established.

By the Act of the 22 Geo. III. chap. 83.

a Plan for this purpose is prepared and digested, which, it is hoped, with the alterations and improvements now proposed, and the additional resources which are here suggested, will be the means of accomplishing the great object before mentioned. The heads and substance of the whole Plan will then be as under:

First, The forming districts of one or more adjacent parishes or places, and houses of reception, for the better maintenance, employment, and government of the poor, at a moderate expence, and under a proper inspection, according to the said Act of the 22 Geo. III. in which the strictest oeconomy is introduced.

The alterations and amendments proposed to be made in that Act, in order to render it effectual and practicable (by which immense savings will be produced in the expenditure), are contained in the following "Observations."

Secondly, The providing a fund or common stock from various articles and matters of supply, to arise within each district, consisting of the following particulars, to be applied in case of the Poor's rates.

1st, The charitable donations, which have been heretofore made and provided, or may hereafter be given for the relief of poor persons, who may become a burthen to any place within the district.

2d, Penalties and forfeitures for offences which are already, by several Acts of Parliament, given to the Poor, but frequently not collected, or if collected, misapplied.

3d, Other penalties and forfeitures given to the King by several Acts of Parliament for certain offences; and also all fines set upon persons for crimes committed, if his Majesty shall be graciously pleased to permit them to be so applied.

4th, A tax to be laid upon dogs, which is a favourite object of taxation with the people, in most parts of the kingdom; and though, perhaps, too precarious a resource for the creditors of the Public, yet if it was to be appropriated to the relief of the Poor, it is apprehended it would be both chearfully paid and faithfully applied, and in many districts would amount to a considerable sum.

5th, An additional toll to be paid at turnpike-gates on Sundays in all places throughout the kingdom, where no additional toll is at present charged for that day.

If the whole of this Plan should be so fortunate as to meet with approbation, these additional resources will be considerable; and it is not doubted but many other productive articles,

articles, equally unexceptionable, will be suggested by those who are inclined to promote it, which may increase the fund in a very great degree.

It is apprehended, from all these resources, and the oconomical regulations prescribed by the late and new intended Act, that the sums to be raised may, in time, take off a considerable part of the Poor's rates; and during its progress, all deficiencies will be made good by those rates, charged according to the present laws; so that no possible inconvenience or interruption can arise from the trial of this experimental Plan.

OBSERVATIONS

TO

**Illustrate such Parts of the PLAN for the
RELIEF and EMPLOYMENT of the POOR,
as may stand in need of Explanation.**

THE fixing proper districts in parishes and places which are not already incorporated by Acts of Parliament, pursuant to the Statute of 22 Geo. III. seems to be a necessary foundation for this Plan.

That Act establishes many excellent rules and regulations for œconomy, and for preventing any fraudulent practices or impositions. (See the Act, or the abstract of it.) It refers to printed copies of all the proceedings, which are inserted in a Schedule to the Act; together with the modes of adjusting the accounts; and also the rules, orders, bye-laws, and regulations, to be observed and enforced at every poor-house, to be provided and established under the authority of the Act. It directs in what manner the parishes and places should be united, and the mode of contributions; but it requires the consent of two-thirds of the owners and occupiers of estates to be obtained as therein mentioned.

There are not many instances of its being enforced, although the provisions are in general admitted

mitted to be very prudently and wisely adopted; but as it is made optional, and no particular persons required to make the application, nor any time fixed for doing it; and as difficulties have been found in getting the concurrence of so great a majority of the persons whose consents are necessary, many who wish to introduce it are discouraged from the attempt.

To obviate these and other difficulties, if it should be thought proper to have a Bill prepared upon this Plan, it may be requisite to amend the late Act in the following particulars, viz.

Instead of procuring the consent of two-thirds of the owners and occupiers of land, &c. within the parish, &c. it may direct that it shall be done with the consent of two-thirds of those who, after due notice given, according to the Act, shall attend the meeting: and that a meeting for the purpose of carrying the Act into execution, shall be called, according to the directions of the Act, by the church-wardens and overseers, sometime in the month of September in every year, till agreed to, under penalties for the neglect in giving such notice: And in order to prevent the districts being too small (as it will require a greater expence to establish this Plan by proper officers, and due regulations, than a small parish can afford), it may be directed that no parish or place should form a single district, whose Poor's rates had not, on a medium of three years preceding, amounted to *per annum* at least; and that no parishes should be united for the purposes of the Act, whose Poor's rates for such parishes, on a medium of three years preceding, shall not have amounted to *per annum* at least.

That

That another clause should be inserted, declaring that every parish or place which should refuse to comply with the provisions of the former, and of the new intended Act, within a time to be specified, shall lose the benefit of the penalties, forfeitures, and fines, and also of the tax upon dogs, the Sunday tolls, and other things to be given by the new proposed Act, in case of the Poor's rates within the district; and that the same should be thereby directed to be applied for the use of the district or districts adjoining the parish or place so refusing to comply, which shall have adopted those provisions, in proportion to the amount of their Poor's rates in the year preceding; and also declaring, that the districts already incorporated by Act of Parliament, for the relief and employment of the Poor, should have the benefit of the resources and supplies mentioned in this Plan, and be at liberty to adopt any of the regulations here proposed.

It is hoped, by these means, there will be very few, if any, parishes or places which will not carry the Acts into execution; and it is apprehended no one will have just cause of complaint, as the option still remains, there being no compulsive clause.

It is proposed that every other defect in the late Act, which has been, or shall be discovered, shall be corrected by the new one.

The labour of the Poor, if well attended to, will be of great use; but the economical savings, if the Plan be adhered to, will be immense; therefore it appears of the utmost consequence to enforce the regulations, when made as perfect as they can be.

With respect to the charitable donations, it is apprehended there are many concealed in different parts of the kingdom, and others grossly misapplied.

An Act to oblige the ministers and church-wardens of every parish to give information, and make returns upon oath, of all charitable donations, for the use of the poor within their limits, would make considerable discoveries, and, instead of retarding, greatly facilitate the progress of this Plan, by increasing the supplies in each district; as discoveries will be daily making of charities applicable to the relief of the Poor, for the care and support of poor children. Such a charity, when applied to the children of idle and profligate parents in the first stage of their lives, might prevent their becoming a burden to the parishes, and be considered as one of the best of charities; for which reason it is hoped all those kind of donations will be particularly attended to, and encouraged.

Besides the charities already given, it is apprehended when this Plan comes to be well established, and the benefits of it to be made apparent by the annual returns at the quarter sessions, pursuant to the act, many new donations and provisions will be voluntarily added by benevolent and well-disposed persons, who may either choose to increase the fund generally, or take for their object some increase of allowance, to such of the poor within the district, whose morals and characters shall recommend them, and who have been brought into distress by infirmities or unavoidable misfortunes. Others may choose for their object, the making better provision for the care and employment of poor children.

As

As to forfeitures and penalties given by Acts of Parliament to or for the use of the Poor, or to his Majesty, it is proposed that they should be extracted from the several statutes, and a list of them printed and circulated for the information of the Public, and of persons whose business it may be to see this Plan executed.

Penalties upon ale-house recognizances, instead of being estreated into the court of Exchequer, may be directed to be recovered in a summary way, and make a part of this fund.

The treasurer of each district, if he shall be thought a proper person, may be directed to recover, collect, and receive, the several penalties, forfeitures and fines, which shall be made applicable to this fund; and if an allowance of one shilling in the pound was to be made him for his trouble, it would be a spur to his diligence, and greatly facilitate the business.

By these means the most salutary laws and provisions will be enforced, and many revived which have long lain dormant. The application here proposed, will make some atonement for the guilt of the offenders, and some recompence to the inhabitants of the places where the crimes were committed, and the offenders resided, and may contribute much to their discovery, and the punishment of the transgressors.

The character of an informer has hitherto been odious; and, on that account, the execution of the penal laws has been much neglected; but, when the penalties and forfeitures are to be applied to the relief of the Poor, the recovery of them will be very useful and laudable.

With regard to the tax upon dogs, as it must greatly reduce the number of them, it will pre-

vent
the great burden
of the Poor

vent much mischief, and may afford succour to many poor people, if they had the food which is too wantonly lavished upon those animals. The quantum of the tax upon each species of dogs, will be considered and settled by the legislature, as also the mode of collecting it. It may be paid by the collector, into the hands of the treasurer of each district.

In places where the Sunday tolls are already appropriated for temporary or particular uses, they may be directed to fall into the common fund for the district, when those purposes are satisfied.

It is further proposed, that in the intended new Act, powers shall be given to aid and assist the institution of clubs or societies mentioned in the Plan, and suitable provisions made for that purpose, and for securing the money from loss or misapplication, which may be collected from those societies who have adopted the best regulations, and been attended with the greatest success.

With respect to all the penalties, forfeitures, and fines, which shall exceed 50l. and also the Sunday tolls, it may be thought proper to direct them to be paid into the hands of such person or persons as the justices of the peace for the county, riding, division, &c. where they arise, shall, at their quarter-sessions, appoint, and be distributed in each year, by the order and direction of three or five gentlemen, to be nominated by the justices at their quarter-sessions, as soon as conveniently may be after the returns from each district shall be made, pursuant to the directions of the said Act, amongst such parishes and places within each county, riding, or division, &c. as shall have complied with the Act, and shall appear to labour under the greatest burdens from their
 Poor,

Poor, in such shares and proportions as they shall think just and reasonable, having particular regard to those parishes and places which shall lie near or contiguous to the places where such penalties, forfeitures, and fines, or the said tolls, shall arise, if they shall appear proper objects for such distribution.

When the fund here proposed shall have received such further resources and augmentations as may be hereafter given to it; and shall be capable of answering, with the oeconomic regulations directed by this Plan, the purposes intended, with a small assistance from the poor's rates, one general Act may be made to amend that now intended to be passed, which may be adapted to the exigencies of the Poor at that time: such parts of the old Acts as shall be thought necessary, may be incorporated in the new one, and all the rest of the statutes upon that subject repealed.

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AS disputes may frequently arise till this whole Plan can be completed, upon matters respecting bastard children, certificate persons, and removal of paupers, which are the principal sources of litigations about paupers and their settlements: it may be proper to consider and ascertain those things in a separate bill, by which means a difference of opinion in any of those points will not interrupt or retard the progress of the other.

In that Bill it may be thought proper to declare, that the settlement of every bastard child shall be in the place where the mother was legally settled, and to direct in what manner, and by what examinations that fact shall be ascertained, before or as soon as conveniently may be, after the birth of the child,

Such a provision will be likely to prevent the cruel and inhuman practice of removing pregnant women, from one parish or place to another, the instant before their delivery, as by the present law the child is settled at the place of its birth.

And, in order to prevent improper removals of paupers from one parish or place to another, which are frequently made on the complaint of parish officers, that such paupers are likely to become chargeable, whilst they are pursuing their lawful occupations, and maintaining their families by their industry, without relief or assistance from any parish, it may be thought fit in that Bill to
declare

declare the particular circumstances and situation in which the pauper ought to be at the time he becomes an object of removal, and to give every necessary direction to prevent any inconvenience or abuse to the parish by that indulgence.

In order to prevent the inconveniencies and hardships arising to paupers, and frequently to parishes, from the improper granting or withholding certificates, it may deserve consideration, whether in that Bill it may not be fit to declare that no certificate hereafter to be granted, shall extend to any other parish or place than that which gives the certificate; and that to which it shall be given, and that it shall extend to no other persons than those described in it, and their children.

The principal object, in printing and circulating this Plan, and these Observations, amongst the Members of Parliament, is to excite their attention to this most interesting subject, and at the same time suggest some things for their consideration, which, if approved and applied, may afford some remedy to the grievances complained of, until a change of system, and the abolition of a great part of the present poor laws can be procured: and it is hoped some preparatory measures will be taken, during the approaching recess of Parliament, in order to facilitate this business in the next session.

THO^s. GILBERT.



